INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS - PROPOSAL

INTERNATIONAL STRAIT AUTHORITY

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Fourth Supplemental Update: The Stalemate Is the Argument

An Independent Analysis — May 12, 2026

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THE RECORD

This analysis has tracked the 2026 Hormuz crisis from its structural origin to its present diplomatic stalemate. For the record:

March 14, 2026: Original proposal filed. The International Strait Authority proposed as a permanent, multilaterally legitimized, militarily underwritten governance structure — before any competing framework existed in public discussion.

March 23, 2026: First Supplemental Update. Iranian resilience changes the window's character without closing it. The USS Boxer MEU deployment independently confirms the geometric logic of Qeshm Island as the functional territorial minimum.

March 26, 2026: Second Supplemental Update. The field of competing proposals — UN peacekeeping mandate, Witkoff 15-point plan, UAE Hormuz Security Force, Iran's toll booth proposal — all manage the water. None addresses the shore. The ISA remains the only framework that resolves the problem rather than managing it.

April 8, 2026: Third Supplemental Update. The ceasefire is the window, not the conclusion. Warned explicitly that frameworks hardening into negotiating positions during the ceasefire interval would become the settlement architecture whether or not adequate to the problem.

May 12, 2026: This update.

THE STALEMATE DIAGNOSIS

The New York Times this morning reports U.S.-Iran negotiations on "life support." The central sticking point: Iran's insistence on maintaining control of the Strait of Hormuz.

This is not a failure of negotiation. It is a failure of framing.

Both sides are negotiating over who controls the governance instrument. The United States cannot concede Iranian control without surrendering the strategic position the campaign was fought to establish. Iran cannot relinquish Strait governance without surrendering the only leverage that gives it weight in any settlement. The bilateral framing makes the stalemate structurally inevitable. Neither party can move.

The ISA resolves this not by splitting the difference but by dissolving the contest. Governance of the Strait becomes multilateral — administered by an international authority on behalf of the transit-dependent world, with both the United States and Iran as stakeholders rather than adversaries. Neither concedes to the other. Both gain what bilateral control cannot provide: legitimacy, revenue, and durability.

The stalemate is not an obstacle to the ISA. It is the ISA's most precise argument.

THE TRUMP-XI SUMMIT AS STRUCTURAL SIGNAL

President Trump is asking President Xi to pressure Iran to reopen the Strait. The administration is reaching for the China variable as bilateral leverage rather than multilateral architecture.

The original proposal's China framework anticipated this moment. Approximately seventy percent of Gulf oil transits to Asian markets, with China as the dominant customer. American positional control of the Strait is, in Chinese strategic terms, a structural chokehold on Chinese energy supply regardless of multilateral legitimization. Trump asking Xi to lean on Iran at a summit is the correct instinct applied to the wrong instrument.

The ISA's observer-status offer to China — guaranteed transit rights, full membership available in exchange for security burden-sharing, structured to be publicly difficult to refuse — converts China's stake in the outcome from a bilateral negotiating chip into a permanent institutional commitment. A summit ask produces a summit answer. An institutional framework produces a durable alignment. The administration is treating as a favor what the ISA would make a structural interest.

THE TOLL BOOTH AND THE FEE MECHANISM

Iran's toll booth proposal remains on the table. It should be read precisely: Iran is not refusing governance. It is insisting on governing unilaterally.

The distance between Iran's toll booth and the ISA fee mechanism is not conceptual. It is architectural. Both sides have already conceded that the Strait requires a governance instrument. The question is whether that instrument is administered by Iran alone or by a multilateral authority in which Iran participates as a stakeholder with revenue, legitimacy, and a legal off-ramp that does not require acknowledging defeat.

A negotiation that has already agreed on the instrument has agreed on more than it knows.

THE WINDOW

The ceasefire interval the third supplement identified as the critical window has not closed. It has extended into a stalemate that is, structurally, the same window in a slower register. The settlement architecture has not been written. The frameworks that hardened during the ceasefire have not produced agreement. The ISA remains the only proposal that combines permanent governance architecture, Iranian stakeholder inclusion, territorial jurisdiction over the shore, and a fee mechanism that gives every party — including Iran — a financial interest in the Strait's continued function.

The stalemate persists because the correct question has been identified and the correct answer has not yet been adopted.

That answer was filed March 14, 2026.

Filed May 12, 2026. Original analysis (March 14, 2026): https://archive.org/details/Proposal_Permanent_Governance_Strait-of-Hormuz

First update (March 23, 2026): https://archive.org/details/the-international-strait-authority-update

Second update (March 26, 2026): https://archive.org/details/isa-second-supplemental-update

Third update (April 8, 2026): https://archive.org/details/isa-third-supplemental-update